

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

BREEZE HILL NEWS

VOLUME II

SEPTEMBER, 1934

No. 6



Dicentra oregana

PUBLISHED WITH REASONABLE REGULARITY BY THE McFARLAND ORGANIZATIONS
MOUNT PLEASANT PRESS, HARRISBURG, PENNA

BREEZE HILL NEWS is sent without cost and without obligation to those who find it useful and ask us to continue to send it. It is published approximately six times a year in the interest of the J. HORACE MCFARLAND COMPANY and the MCFARLAND PUBLICITY SERVICE, at the Mount Pleasant Press, in Harrisburg, Pa.

The purpose of BREEZE HILL NEWS is to demonstrate how its publishers are prepared to serve the horticultural trade by growing, testing, blooming, photographing, and faithfully recording a large and changing succession of roses, annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees at Breeze Hill Gardens. Those records, those pictures, and the suggestive knowledge upon which recommendations can be made, are put back of the horticultural selling service of the Mount Pleasant Press by intelligent writing, illustrating, and printing, both in black and color.

Questions about plants, pictures, sales promotion, and printing are cheerfully answered without obligation on either side. Visitors are welcomed at the Mount Pleasant Press in Harrisburg (at the corner of Mulberry and Crescent streets, ten minutes' walk from the Pennsylvania Railroad station) and at Breeze Hill Gardens (2101 Bellevue Road, Harrisburg). Contact is maintained at the Mount Pleasant Press with all the English-speaking garden world, and, to some extent, with garden lovers who use other languages.

On request to Box 687, Harrisburg, Pa., the current Breeze Hill Finding-List, which gives an idea of the scope of the plant-trials undertaken at any particular time, will be provided. Suggestions for further trials are welcomed. It is the desire of the publishers to make the world's best in plant-life available to American gardens, homes, parks, and pleasure-grounds. It is likewise the established purpose, manifested over forty years of increasing business, to make the selling service of the Mount Pleasant Press effective for worthy items that should be used in American gardens.

WHAT KIND OF SEASON?

By J. HORACE MCFARLAND

IF EVER there was a season to discredit "the oldest inhabitant" and the other nuisances who can explain everything, the growing—and freezing!—time of 1934 was such a season.

Everything was sweet and fine in late January, and the writer of these words was crowing loudly over the lazy winter that seemed then to be almost over. Wham! February's zero fingers closed down on a snowless garden and did things to it. It wasn't just the low temperatures, or the icy winds, or the bare ground, probably. But what was it, and why?

With "hardy" roses frozen to the ground, and yet with *Magnolia grandiflora* and the Japanese box coming through virtually unhurt; with forty other anomalies facing us, "Where are we at?"

One thing we know, and that is that we don't know anything about hardiness. Another bit of knowledge, or perhaps of just good sense, is that we don't intend to let the one worst winter of Breeze Hill history discourage us in any way, or as to any plant. We've just wiped the winter out of our calendar and are going ahead "in high."

Another definite conclusion is one of thankfulness to the scores and hundreds of intelligent garden visitors who have been to see the gardens, and who have exchanged troubles and successes with us. We feel that the spirit of Breeze Hill is coming to be realized, and we want to continue our efforts to make that spirit count for garden good.

THE GARDEN IN 1934

THE winter of 1933-34 will probably go down in history as the most severe this district has endured in a century. In fact, the director of Morris Arboretum, near Philadelphia, told us early last spring that he was fearful for the hardiness of certain giant trees ninety years old, which had never before experienced such a winter. In Harrisburg the thermometer not once but many times hovered around the zero mark and once fell to twelve degrees below. In ordinary winters we seldom have more than one brief cold snap when the thermometer hovers in the single digits.

The winter began with a severe cold spell in December, followed by a comparatively mild January, and an unspeakably bad February. March was also cold and wet, and it was not until the middle of April that we were able to do any effective garden work. Then spring came with a rush, and there was not time enough to replace and repair all the damage.

For the first time in many years forsythias did not bloom well. The buds were frozen. Tulips which had been above the ground in the latter part of January were badly damaged.

Crocus Tomasinianus, which usually blooms on Washington's Birthday, did not open its flowers until the first of April. Most of the *deutzias* were either frozen to the ground or so badly damaged that they did not bloom. Even the hardier azalea hybrids failed to flower, and *Rhododendron dahuricum*, which usually blooms in midwinter, never opened a bud.

An accurate check of the climbing roses disclosed that fifty-five per cent of them had been killed to the ground, but a few of them later renewed themselves from the base. The mortality among the Hybrid Teas was equally great. Fully half of them were destroyed.

Necessarily, a large part of our time was devoted early in the season to removing the wreckage. Great numbers of dead shrubs and tender trees were taken out and burned, and many others had to be cut back half or three-quarters of their growth. The bonfires burned unceasingly from day to day.

Among the perennials, losses were less severe although many alpine which we had suspected of being tender, removed all doubts as well as themselves.

There were curious exceptions in the general disaster. Two plants of *Magnolia grandiflora*, supposedly not hardy in this section, came through the winter, one with apparently no damage at all, and the other with only its tips killed. The former bloomed abundantly this year.

Cedrus deodara, apparently an uncertain subject, was damaged only where our burlap wind-break fell against the plant and allowed moisture and icicles to form on the tips of the branches. On the other hand, our great plant of *Ligustrum lucidum*, or *japonicum*—we have never been able to get authorities to agree which it is—was killed to the ground and will probably not recover. Also our pet plant of *Taiwania cryptomerioides* was destroyed in spite of heavy protection. *Hovenia dulcis*, which had grown to a tree fifteen feet high, perished also. *Clerodendrum trichotomum* went to the ground but has renewed itself from suckers.

Common boxwood was badly frozen, but *Buxus japonica* and *B. microphylla koreana* were unharmed. *Abelia grandiflora* froze to the ground, and *Teucrium Chamædrys*, which has been recommended as a dwarf evergreen, hardier than boxwood, was much more severely damaged; we lost more than half our plants and the rest were cut to the ground.

But probably the most serious of all was the winter damage to the horse-chestnuts. A leaf blight attacked them in the summer of 1933, causing most of the foliage to fall. Weak shoots were put out in the autumn, but apparently the trees went into the winter in an unsound state. This spring they leafed out slowly but did not bloom. An examination showed what was apparently a saprophytic fungus growing in the dead cambium of many twigs and branches, and it has been necessary to remove one huge tree, and the others are in a precarious state. The Davey men have sprayed them and pruned out the dead wood. While the leaf blight may be responsible to a large extent for their condition, we are inclined to blame the winter for the most of it and to consider the fungus as attacking the tree after it was injured, and not as the agent of the damage.

The consequence of all this damage was that the garden this year has been much less colorful than usual. The shrub display, except for the *kolkwitzias*, *weigelas*, and *spiræas*, was insignificant. The tulips were very bad, the daffodils and narcissus only fair. The lilacs were excellent, but the iris bloomed only in the higher, drier parts of the garden. The first ray of hope came with the peonies, which were superb this year. The roses were not good and have not been good the whole summer. The perennial display, taking into account the obvious losses, was equal to the average. The phlox were particularly good and the large collection of early chrysanthemums promises a fine display this autumn. All in all, we were very much disgusted with the so-called hardy subjects, and our interest was transferred to the annual section. Here we were more successful.

For the first time, we managed to secure a really good stand and bloom from outdoor carnations. The Beauty of Nice strain in four or five varieties, gave an excellent account of itself. The plants were set out four inches apart and supported themselves more or less adequately, although more than twenty-five per cent of them succumbed to some kind of carnation disease. Certain rust-proof antirrhinums turned out very well, although they did not bloom much after the first display, and we had a very interesting experience with spring-sown pansy seed, the flowers coming into bloom in early July and continuing in fine bloom for six weeks.

There were some interesting new forms of dianthus, an unusual dwarf ruffled petunia, and two forms of the yellow cosmos which have made us very happy.

On the other hand, calendulas and the general run of petunias, annual larkspurs, and verbenas have been disappointing as usual; and once more we tried clarkia, godetia, and schizanthus, only to meet with the accustomed failure.

Taking it by and large, in spite of our disappointment we cannot consider the year as a total loss. For one thing, it gave us an opportunity to clear out great quantities of half-hardy material which had no place in a garden so small as Breeze Hill. Fully half of the so-called Kurume azaleas are gone, never to be replaced, particularly those of the vicious salmon-pink shades, and we took advantage of the opportunity to destroy all the plants of *A. amœna*, a thing which nurserymen should have thrown out long ago.

We gained space for our chrysanthemum trials by the diminution of the vast number of more or less unimportant roses which cluttered up our test-garden, leaving us a lot of fresh new ground for new varieties as they come in the next few years.

The damage in the main rose-garden also decided us in our intention to replant it entirely with blocks of selected varieties, and at the same time make slight changes in the arrangement of the beds.

As the summer draws to a close it becomes more and more apparent that the opportunities for improvement at Breeze Hill lie largely in thinning out and removing the less desirable trees and shrubs and in giving the choicer things an opportunity to develop. We have been far too soft-hearted in the past, and have devoted too much time and effort to the thankless job of trying to grow things there which are not suited to the place, such as rhododendrons and lilies. We hope in the next few years to remove or restrain the more obstreperous plants, to get rid of all the weaklings, and to continue to search for plants and shrubs which can be successfully grown in this climate.—G. A. S.

BROKEN TULIPS

DURING the past ten years more than 800 varieties of tulips of all types have been grown and studied at Breeze Hill. At the beginning of our special observations we had about 8,000 bulbs of 200 varieties, more or less, which had been on the place a long time, for we had lifted and replanted our own bulbs over a varying period of years.

Tulips grow well at Breeze Hill. The soil seems particularly well adapted to them, and they multiply with amazing speed. One bulb left in the ground accidentally will produce three or four offsets which usually bloom the second year and eventually stool in a noble clump of twelve or more blooming stems, just as daffodils do.

During the first three years of our study we kept adding varieties until in 1927, having exhausted the resources of American catalogues, we imported a collection of named florists' tulips, Bizarres, Rembrandts, Rose Bybloems, and Violet Bybloems.

These bulbs were grown in our test-plots for one year, after which they were lifted and sifted into their proper alphabetical sequence among our stored bulbs of other



The tulip *Rosabella* at Breeze Hill in 1929, showing three broken flowers

varieties, and were afterwards planted in borders, the same as we had been doing for years with other types.

Two years later *Bybloems*, *Bizarres*, and *Rembrandts* appeared in all our tulip plantings, and it was clearly apparent that the strangers were broken forms of our own varieties and not mixtures from the imported bulbs.

We did not attach much importance to this at first, because it is well known that the old florists' varieties originated as sports from the so-called *Breeders*, but when these sports began to appear with increasing frequency, not only in the *Breeders* and *Darwins* but also in the so-called *Cottage* types and the *Single Early* varieties, we began to suspect that something was wrong.

In 1932, feeling sure that there was contagion in the broken forms, we began the systematic eradication of them by digging out the bulbs of all broken flowers and burning them immediately. Also we promptly got rid of the original imported bulbs and their offspring. This drastic action cut down our 800 varieties to less than 350 by the midsummer

of 1932. Since then we have been waging a losing fight. Each year an increasingly large percentage of our tulips break into the striped and flaked forms. The past year, 1933, whole blocks of Darwins, Breeders, and Cottage varieties came broken, without a single self-colored flower among them. In consequence, we have taken up and destroyed our whole collection except the plain white and plain yellow varieties. They do not break. We also retained a few of the Early and Double Early sorts which seem much more resistant to breaking than the late bloomers.

It is probably well known now, through the medium of a recent publication of the United States Department of Agriculture, that the breaking of tulips is an infectious mosaic disease. The Breeze Hill experience is evidence enough to show that the infection can be spread by the soil, by contact with infected tools, possibly containers, and the



A block of La Fiancée showing nearly 50 per cent broken forms

hands, for many bulbs planted in soil remote from the original sources of infection produced broken flowers. For the past three years it has been impossible to keep any variety of tulip free from breaking after the first season.

In the face of this experience, it seems very strange to us that the old Dutch florists had such great difficulty in producing the flamed and feathered flowers which they admired so much, for when once started there seems to be no stopping the progress of the disease.

Many of the broken forms are exquisitely beautiful. We remember, particularly, a lovely series of breaks in the variety Old Times, but for massed planting and landscape use the feathered and flamed flowers are worthless. Individual characteristics, and the delicate tones of the lighter hues are destroyed, so that a broken Clara Butt is almost identical with a broken Farncombe Sanders.

Now that the Department of Agriculture has satisfied itself that tulip breaking is an infectious disease, would it be asking too much to have the Department tell us how it can be prevented?—G. A. S.

FROM THE BREEZE HILL NOTEBOOKS

VI

DICENTRA OREGANA

It has been observed over and over again that the natural conditions under which plants grow are not infallible as a guide to cultivation in the garden. A good illustration is provided by the behavior of the Western Bleeding-heart, *Dicentra oregana*. Gabrielson, in his "Western American Alpines," highly praises this charming plant and recommends it "for a well-drained rockery, particularly where its roots are sheltered from the sun."

Two good plants of *Dicentra glauca*, as it was then called,

came to Breeze Hill in the spring of 1931 and were planted in a well-drained rockery in half shade, while we impatiently awaited their blooming. Although they lived and made pretty clumps of silvery foliage, never a glimpse did we catch of the cream and purple flowers we were so anxious to see. One plant died in the winter and the second was dwindling. But about that time two more arrived which were planted, in defiance to instructions, in a cool, moist, leaf-mold bed near the artificial spring in Maple Brook, in company with ferns and primroses. They grew vigorously, and in a few weeks exceeded the six to eight inches ascribed to them, easily reaching a height of twelve to sixteen, and soon produced numerous sprays of lovely ivory-tinted flowers tipped with ruddy lilac. Then we moved the poor dwindling original plant to the same location, and it, too, in spite of the lateness of the season, broke into new growth and bloom. The flowers are shown on the cover.

Dicentra oregana appears to us a much more attractive plant than either *D. formosa* or *D. eximia*, which we have long regarded as excellent ground-covers for shady places, and it thrives, apparently, under the same conditions. We are disappointed that its flowers are not as rich yellow as we expected them to be, and the purple spot is a bit faint, but their exquisite, jewel-like character makes up those deficiencies.



ROSA FARRERI

Among the numerous new and rare plants brought out of Asia by Reginald Farrer, is the little wild rose which bears

his name. It is a dainty little shrub with the habit of sending up fairly long, half-horizontal, very spiny shoots clothed with short side branches and with well-designed foliage. On spurs along these side shoots, and along the main stem above them, the flowers are borne singly. They are small, scarcely more than an inch across, reddish in the bud but open pale pink, with a creamy tone in the center and deeper rose on the back.

Our plants came from Scotland two years ago and have taken possession of a square yard or so of the rock-garden by sending out vigorous underground stolons. The stems are two to four feet long and lie almost parallel with the surface, a foot or so above it. The branch in the picture does not show its true habit, for it was made to hang over the large limestone rock, by setting a fairly large stone upon it near its base.



Rosa Farreri in the rock-garden